

THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

THE Commissioners on the fine arts, of which Prince Albert is the head, having called upon Mr. Barry, as architect, to furnish them with a report as to his views relating to the "internal decorations, additions to buildings, and local improvements," that gentleman transmitted his report to his Royal Highness and the commission last month. Judging the subject as likely to interest our readers, especially as many of the suggestions offered by Mr. Barry will undoubtedly be carried out, we place the following particulars of the proposed decorations, &c. before our readers, for which we are indebted to the *Morning Herald*:-

"As presiding over her Majesty's commissioners for encouraging the fine arts in connection with the rebuilding of the new Houses of Parliament, I venture to address your Royal Highness, and, in compliance with the instructions of the commission, to offer the following suggestions relative to the internal finishings and decorations of the new Houses of Parliament, the completion of the exterior and local improvements, which are, in my opinion, necessary to give full effect to the new building; and by way of illustration of the remarks I have to make on this subject, I beg to transmit the accompanying plan of the principal floor of the new building, a general plan of part of Westminster, in which the new building is shown in connection with various improvements proposed to be made in its locality, and two drawings relating to the Westminster-bridge.

THE DECORATIONS.

"With reference to the interior of the new Houses of Parliament generally, I would suggest that the walls of the several halls, galleries, and corridors of approach, as well as the various public apartments throughout the building, should be decorated with paintings having reference to events in the history of the country; and that those paintings should be placed in compartments formed by such a suitable arrangement of the architectural designs of the interior as will best promote their effective union with the art of sculpture and architecture. With this view, I should consider it to be of the utmost importance that the paintings should be wholly free from gloss on the surface, that they may be perfectly seen and fully understood from all points of view. That all other portions of the plain surfaces of the walls should be covered with suitable architectonic decoration, or diapered enrichment in colour, occasionally enlivened with gold, and blended with armorial bearings, badges, cognisances, and other heraldic insignia, emblazoned in their proper colours. That such of the halls as are groined should have their vaults decorated in a similar manner, with the addition occasionally of subjects or works of art so interwoven with the diapered ground as not to disturb the harmony or the effect of the architectural composition. That such of the ceilings as are flat should be formed into compartments by mouldered ribs, enriched with carved heraldic and Tudor decorations. That those ceilings should be relieved by positive colour and gilding, and occasionally by gold grounds with diaper enrichments, legends, and heraldic devices in colour. That the screens, pillars, corbels, niches, drawings of the windows, and other architectural decorations, should be painted to harmonise with the paintings and diapered decorations of the walls generally, and be occasionally relieved with positive colour and gilding. That the door-jambs and fire-places should be constructed of British marbles of suitable quality and colour, highly polished, and occasionally relieved by colour and gilding in their mouldings and sculptural enrichments.

"That the floors of the several halls, galleries, and corridors should be formed of encaustic tiles, bearing heraldic decorations and other enrichments in colours, laid in margins and compartments, in combination with polished British marbles; and that the same description of marbles should also be employed for the steps of the several staircases.

"That the walls, to the height of from eight to ten feet, should be fitted with oak framing, containing shields with armorial bearings emblazoned in their proper colours; and an oak seat should in all cases be placed against such framing. That the windows of the several

halls, galleries, and corridors should be glazed doubly, for the purpose of tempering the light and preventing the direct rays of the sun from interfering with the effect of the internal decorations generally. For this purpose the outer glazing is proposed to be of ground glass, in single plates, and the inner glazing of an ornamental design in metal, filled with stained glass, bearing arms and other heraldic insignia in their proper colours; but so arranged as that the ground, which I should recommend to be of a warm yellowish tint, covered with a running foliage or diaper, and occasionally relieved by legends in black letter, should predominate, in order that so much light only may be excluded as may be thought desirable to do away with either a garish or cold effect upon the paintings and decorations generally. Practically, I consider that the double glazing will be of essential service in carrying out the system of warming and ventilating proposed to be adopted in the building generally; which system renders it unnecessary that the windows in those portions of the building above referred to should be made to open, so that all prejudicial effects upon the paintings and other decorations, which might be caused by the dampness and impurity of the atmosphere, and much practical inconvenience, and probably unsightliness in the means that would be necessary to adopt for opening and shutting casements, would be avoided.

"That in order to promote the art of sculpture, and its effective union with painting and architecture, I would propose that in the halls, galleries, and corridors, statues might be employed for the purpose of dividing the paintings on the walls. By this arrangement a rich effect of perspective, and a due subordination of the several arts to each other would be obtained. The statues suggested should, in my opinion, be of marble, of the colour of polished alabaster, and be raised upon lofty and suitable pedestals, placed close to the wall, in niches, surmounted by enriched canopies; but the niches should be shallow, so that the statues may be as well seen laterally as in front.

"The architectural decorations of these niches might be painted of such colours as will give the best effect to the adjoining paintings, being relieved in parts by positive colour and gilding; and the backs of them might be painted in dark colours, such as chocolate, crimson, or blue, or they might be of gold, for the purpose of giving effect to the statues.

"Having thus described the views I entertain as to the character of the decorations of the interior generally, I now proceed to notice in detail the special decorations and arrangements which I would propose for the several halls, galleries, and principal apartments.

WESTMINSTER HALL.

"I would propose that Westminster Hall, which is 239 feet long, 68 feet wide, and 90 feet high, should be made the depository, as in former times, for all trophies obtained in war with foreign nations. These trophies might be so arranged above the paintings on the walls and in the roof as to have a very striking and interesting effect.

"I would further suggest that pedestals, 20 in number, answering to the position of the principal ribs of the roof, should be placed so as to form a central avenue, 30 feet wide, from the north entrance door to St. Stephen's porch, for statues of the most celebrated British statesmen, whose public services have been commemorated by monuments erected at the public expense, as well as for present and future statesmen whose services may be considered by Parliament to merit a similar tribute to their memories.

"The statues (26 in number) which have already been proposed to be placed against the walls, between the pictures, I would suggest should be those of naval and military commanders.

"The subjects of the paintings on the walls, 28 in number, 16 feet in length and 10 feet in height, might relate to the most splendid warlike achievements of English history, both by sea and by land, which, as well as the statues that are proposed to divide them, might be arranged chronologically.

"To give due effect to those suggested decorations, it is proposed that the light should be considerably increased by an enlargement of the dormer windows in the roof, by which

also that extraordinary and beautiful piece of decorative carpentry of the 14th century may be seen to much greater advantage than has ever yet been the case.

"This noble hall, certainly the most splendid in its style in the world, thus decorated by the union of painting, sculpture, and architecture, and aided by the arts of decoration as suggested, it is presumed would present a most striking appearance, and be an object of great national interest.

ST. STEPHEN'S HALL.

"I would suggest that this hall, which will be 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 50 feet high, and have a stone-groined ceiling, should be appropriated to the reception of paintings, commemorative of great domestic events in British history, and statues of celebrated statesmen in past, present, and future times. The paintings may be 10 in number, 15 feet long and 10 feet high, and 12 statues would be required as a frame to them. In the upper part of the hall, 30 niches will be provided for statues of eminent men of the naval, military, and civil services of the country.

THE CENTRAL HALL.

"This hall will be an octagon of 60 feet in diameter, and 50 feet high, covered with a groined ceiling in stone. As each side will be wholly occupied with windows, and arched openings of access, paintings cannot form any part of its decoration. It may, however, with good effect, be extensively decorated with sculpture. In the centre of the pavement might be placed a statue of her present Most Gracious Majesty, upon a rich pedestal of British marble, highly polished, and relieved in parts by gold and colour. The niches in the walls and screens might be filled with statues of her Majesty's ancestors, in chronological order, even up to the period of the Heptarchy. In front of the eight clustered pillars in the angles of the hall, might be placed, with good effect, seated statues of some of the great lawgivers of antiquity.

THE VICTORIA GALLERY.

"This gallery will be 130 feet long, 45 feet wide, and 40 feet high, with a flat ceiling, and will admit of both paintings and sculpture. The subjects of the painting on the walls, 16 in number, which may be 12 feet long and 10 feet high, might relate to some of the most remarkable royal pageants of British history or other appropriate subjects. Statues of her present Most Gracious Majesty might fill the central niches at the ends of the hall, and the other niches, as well as the pedestals between the paintings, might be occupied by statues of her Majesty's ancestors. These statues might, with good effect, be of bronze, either partially or wholly gilt.

CORRIDORS OF ACCESS THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING.

"The principal corridors of access to the various apartments of the building will be 12 feet wide, their ceilings will be flat, and they will be generally lighted from windows near the ceiling. The walls may be decorated with portraits as well as paintings, illustrative of some of the most remarkable events in the history of the country, or in the lives of its most eminent personages. For this purpose about 2,600 feet in length of wall, by a height of about seven feet, may be appropriated on the principal floor: 900 feet in length, by a height of about seven feet on the one-pair floor; and about 400 feet, by the same height, on the two-pair floor. These paintings may be divided into subjects at pleasure, by margins or borders of architectonic decoration in accordance with the style of the building.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

"This house will be 93 feet long, 45 feet wide, and 50 feet high, and will have a flat ceiling in panels. As the fittings for the accommodation required for the business of the house, together with the windows which are necessary for daily lighting it, leave little space of plain wall, paintings cannot, with good effect, form any part of its decoration. Niches, however, will be provided, which might be filled with statues of royal personages. The architectural details of the ceiling may be enriched and relieved with gold and colour, and the windows filled with stained glass as before described. The whole of the fittings are proposed to be of oak, with appropriate carvings. The throne will be highly enriched and relieved by colour